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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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C 207

1 September 1972

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: SEP 2001

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[redacted]

7 September 1972

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WEST GERMANY: The Munich tragedy has dealt a major blow to West Germany's self-esteem and international prestige, and could affect the coming elections.

Chancellor Brandt had hoped that the Olympic Games, the first in Germany since 1936, would give him a sorely needed boost in the parliamentary elections this fall. Although he and his colleagues in Bonn performed creditably during the crisis, the fact of the tragedy and the inevitable questions about how it was handled will overshadow all other aspects of the games.

A public mood of dissatisfaction, shame, and even insecurity could harm Brandt's election chances if only because he is the incumbent. Public attention is likely to focus on the inability of security officials to anticipate or prevent the terrorist attack and, later, to rescue the Israeli hostages.

The Christian Democratic/Christian Social opposition will probably find it difficult to exploit the tragedy. Although both parties have hit hard on the "law and order" issue, the conservative Christian Social Union controls the Bavarian government and, in West Germany's federated police structure, would have to bear the onus for much criticism. Political leaders and security officials from all parties, moreover, joined forces on 5 September in reacting to the terrorist attack. The temptation to seek partisan political gain may also be offset by a greater desire to prevent further damage to West Germany's international image.

The extent and nature of foreign reaction could also have an impact in West Germany. German opinion will be most sensitive to any criticism from Israel, although Brandt appears to have coordinated West German actions with an Israeli Government minister who flew to Munich on 5 September.

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